

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

FMC-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 SAL-01 CG-00 DLOS-06 OES-06 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8690

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 0543

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EWWT, NA

SUBJECT: NIGERIAN THREAT TO PREFERENTIAL BERTHING
ARRANGEMENTS

REF: A) STATE 07928, B) STATE 11135

1. RENEWED CONGESTION IN NIGERIAN PORTS HAS MOTIVATED FMG TO CONSIDER REMOVING PRIORITY BERTHING ARRANGEMENTS FROM FOREIGN CONFERENCE LINES. SINCE OCT. 31, WAITING QUEUE HAS EXTENDED FROM 70 SHIPS TO OVER 100. IN RESPONSE TO INCREASINGLY VISIBLE MESS. HEAD OF STATE ORDERED NPA TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO REDUCE CONGESTION. ON JANUARY 6 NPA SENT LETTER TO SHIPPING CONFERENCES ADVISING THAT PRIORITY BERTHING RIGHTS WOULD BE SUSPENDED INDEFINITELY AS OF FEBRUARY 1. LETTER, WHICH WAS RECEIVED ON JAN. 10, ALSO INVITED CONFERENCE REPS TO MEET WITH NPA ON JANUARY 14 TO DISCUSS SITUATION.

2. ROOT OF PROBLEM HAS BEEN LAX MANAGEMENT BY NIGERIAN PORT AUTHORITY (NPA) IN ISSUING TOO MANY REGISTRATIONS TO NON-CONFERENCE LIME VESSELS. ACCORDING TO REGULATIONS, REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES MUST BE ISSUED 60 DAYS IN ADVANCE OF SHIP'S ARRIVAL IN NIGERIAN PORT, WITH ISSUANCE THEORETICALLY BASED ON HOW ESSENTIAL IS SHIP'S CARGO. HANDLING THIS SYSTEM LIGHTLY,
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NPA ALLOWED 5 NON-CONFERENCE SHIPS TO ENTER LAGOS WATERS IN NOVEMBER, 18 IN DECEMBER, AND 27 SO FAR IN JANUARY. ONLY FOUR BERTHS ARE AVAILABLE FOR NON-CONFERENCE UNLOADING AND WAITING LINE IS AGAIN EXTENDING DRAMATICALLY. THIS ACCOMPANIED IN PAST THREE MONTHS BY GENERAL DETERIORATION IN ALL PHASES OF PORT OPERATIONS.

3. AT 1/14 SESSION, ATTENDED BY LARGE NUMBER OF SHIPPING LINE EXECUTIVES, IT AGREED THAT TWO REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH CONFERENCE WOULD FORM COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY NPA OFFICIAL TO ADVISE NPA ON HOW TO LESSEN CONGESTION AND GENERALLY IMPROVE PORT PRODUCTIVITY. GROUP WORKED THROUGH WEEKEND AND ON 1/17 MET AGAIN WITH NPA HIERARCHY. COMMITTEE PROPOSED NUMBER OF SUGGESTIONS (E.G., CONFERENCE SHIPS ALREADY IN PIPELINE MUST HAVE FIRST CRACK AT PRIORITY BERTHS, COMMITTEE MUST CONTROL BERTHING ASSIGNMENTS FOR ALL VESSELS). OFFICIAL NPA RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS NOT YET AVAILABLE. (FYI. CONFIDENTIALLY ADMITTED AIMOF CONFERENCE REPS IS TO SURRENDER NO MORE THAN 7-10 DAYS PER MONTH AT EACH PRIORITY BERTH TO NON-CONFERENCE VESSELS.)

4. SUSPENSION OF CONFERENCE LINE PRIVILEGES WOULD EXTEND TO ALL NIGERIAN PORTS. IN PORT HARCOURT, FOR EXAMPLE, AMERICA-WEST AFRICAN CONFERENCE RECENTLY RECEIVED GUARANTEE OF DOCKING WITHIN 2-5 DAYS AFTER ARRIVAL IN HARBOR. IF THIS CANCELLED, NEXT SHIP WOULD BE OBLIGED TO GET IN QUEUE BEHIND 27 OTHER WAITING VESSELS.

5. CONTAINER TRAFFIC NOT AFFECTED, AS CONTAINERS IN LAGOS UNLOADED AT SPECIAL BERTH. AMERICA-WEST AFRICAN CONFERENCE ONLY AUTHORIZED 600 CONTAINERS PER MONTH, HOWEVER, IN CONTRAST TO 1700 FOR UKWAL.

6. CONFERENCE LINES SURPRISED AND SEVERELY DISCOURAGED BY NEW THREAT. MONTHS OF CAREFUL PLANNING ON SHIP MOVEMENTS NOW FACE HAVOC. AMERICAN SHIPPING LINES OFFICIALS HAVE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WILL STAY IN THE GAME. ACCESS TO NIGERIAN CONFIDENTIAL

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PORTS AND CONTINUED AMICABLE RELATIONS WITH PORT AUTHORITIES CRUCIAL IN THEIR VIEW AS U.S. EXPORTS BEGINNING TO PENETRATE MARKET IN LARGE AMOUNTS.
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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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